



April 18, 2022

Testimony in support of:

S.R. 12 RESOLUTION PROPOSING APPROVAL OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT AND THE STATE EMPLOYEES BARGAINING AGENT COALITION (SEBAC).

H.R. 11 RESOLUTION PROPOSING APPROVAL OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT AND THE STATE EMPLOYEES BARGAINING AGENT COALITION (SEBAC).

My name is Sean Howard. I am a state correction officer and President of AFSCME Local 387, representing front-line prison staff in the Cheshire Complex. I am testifying on behalf of AFSCME Local 387, Local 1565 and Local 391, and our 4,500 corrections employee members. We are also among those who the Yankee Institute recently referred to as blood sucking ticks.

What I can tell you is that I stand in awe of my colleagues. I see them sacrifice every day. I see them perform their duty every day. This is because they are patriotic, loyal professionals. They keep order in overstressed, understaffed corrections facilities.

Often they work in dorms where there are one or two officers to keep peace among 100 or more inmates. The most challenging job they have is to keep predatory inmates from preying on the majority of passive inmates.

Staffing is at an all-time low in our facilities. There is a facility where 25% of the staff has less than six months on the job. Staff has been ordered into overtime to an exhausting and unhealthy extent. I see colleagues who have forgone retirement to stay and train new officers, because their sense of duty won't allow them to leave the new officers and the public vulnerable.

The commissioner of DOC recently testified about how assaults against staff and inmates have risen. This is because we are dealing with a smaller, but tougher population of inmates.

State prisons have been a petri dish for the spread of COVID-19. There have been more than 4,600 cases of staff getting infected with Covid. In February 2020, I contracted COVID-19 on the job. More than two years later, I am still living with the damage. COVID left me with a damaged heart. This leaves me feeling fatigued and short of breath. Sometimes, I can't even play with my young son. I see a cardiologist regularly and I'm on 7 medications due to my condition. My cardiologist has confirmed that this is something I will always deal with.

Throughout the pandemic, my fellow corrections employees and I have done our duty for the people of Connecticut. We kept our facilities running, despite the risks, because our communities depend on us.

Now we ask you to do your duty. Watch out for us. This is not a rich contract. It is a passably fair contract. Please vote for House Resolution 11 and Senate Resolution 12. Let our members know that you value their work and their sacrifice. Stand with us. Not with an organization, that appears to be funded by corporate billionaires, and calls my brave colleagues blood sucking ticks. Thank you for your consideration.